

# ABORIGINAL MIDDENS OF POINT CARTWRIGHT DISTRICT.

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(Figures 1-7.)

On many parts of the Queensland coast, old aboriginal camping grounds with the usual supply of shells and stone chips occur at intervals at places suitable for such a purpose, and regulated, of course, by the supply of food and water in the locality.

Between Point Cartwright at the mouth of the Mooloolah River and Lake Garrimundi just to the north of Caloundra there occurs a stretch of uninhabited coast, consisting of a line of sand dunes backed by a large plain or boronia swamp, stretching west to the Mooloolah River. In the folds of these sandhills, a number of fine kitchen middens are located. During the years 1932 to 1934, several of these were in excellent condition, appearing as though they had only recently been abandoned. However, at the beginning of the year 1938, they were found to be suffering from the effects of heavy seas which, during the winter months, had swept far up into the sandhills.

These old camping grounds lie within the rich territory formerly inhabited by the Kabi tribe, and formed bases periodically visited during their nomadic wanderings.

The camps occur only among those sandhills which are devoid of trees, one reason for this being that they were less likely to be disturbed there by a hostile party, while sleeping off the effects of a feast of rich coastal food. The enemy naturally would find it hard to creep upon a camp situated in the centre of an extensive white sand dune. Another point in favour of these positions is the absence of mosquitoes and sandflies in the summer months, which would not be the case in amongst the low scrubby vegetation of the timbered sandhills.

Fresh water is abundant even when the swamps are suffering from a spell of drought, and the blacks had only to dig a foot or more into the sand at the base of the depressions on the western side of the dunes to obtain a plentiful supply.

In an examination of one of these middens the most striking feature is the quantity of "eugarie" shells (*Donax deltoides*), Q.E. 3302, spread about the sand.

This shell-fish formed a large item on the menu of the coastal blacks, and was obtained in the surf at low water by digging with the foot. A curious point to observe is the fact that the shells are more or less of a uniform size; neither the very small nor the very large ones appear to be present. Possibly the larger ones lacked the flavour of those of medium size, or else overfishing had prevented full development. This is rather an interesting point in view of the fact that many of the large middens on Stradbroke Island are filled with shells of maximum size.

Being a bivalve the "eugarie" was opened by being subjected to heat alongside a small fire. This accounts for the fact that the shells are nearly all in perfect condition, only showing the results of weathering during the time they have been lying around the sandhills.

Apart from utilising the flesh for food, the Aborigines used the shells of these animals as planes and scrapers for smoothing boomerangs and spears, and for reducing the latter to a sharp point, just as the more inland blacks used the fresh water mussel shell.

Passing from the shell deposits, we next turn to the stones and rocks which have been carried to this area for the purpose of manufacturing various implements. The largest are the grinding and pounding stones which are perhaps the most local in origin. They are made from the same rocks which form most of Point Cartwright and Moffats Head to the North and South of the area respectively, that is various grades of sandstone ranging from a very fine-grained variety up to a fairly coarse grit. They were apparently carried along the miles of beach to their present location by the unfortunate women.

The variety of stones other than these is very extensive. The commonest is quartzite of various kinds, this rock being excellent for the making of knives, scrapers, etc. We find also trachyte, granite, hornblende-porphyrite, flint, quartz, opal, agate and petrified wood.

Amongst other implements used extensively in this district by the Aborigines were those associated with the preparation of fern root for food. The fern, *Blechnum serrulatum*, known to the blacks as "bungwall," is very common in all coastal swamps. It possesses a thick rhizome growing perpendicularly in the soil. This was dug up by the women with the aid of yam sticks, or by hand, after which it was cleaned and roasted in hot ashes. Then came the chopping-up process, with the aid of a stone implement, specially suited for this purpose. The root was placed on a log or piece of wood, and the chopper held in one hand. After having been reduced to small pieces, it was either eaten thus or else further ground and pounded on grinding stones, then mixed with a little water and made into small cakes. It was apparently a very nourishing food.

The chopper used for this purpose is an implement of quartzite or some other suitable rock, flaked away on one margin after the style of a chisel, and possessing secondary chipping along its edge. Figs. 1, 2 and 3.

Mr. N. B. Tindale, of the South Australian Museum, informs me that these implements are similar to a characteristic type found in Southern Australia, and belong to the same type as the "Sumatra implements" of the Malay Peninsula. They have not previously been recorded from Queensland.

A similar implement collected by myself at the Piccabeen Lakes, Northern New South Wales, in 1930, gives an idea of their coastal distribution both north and south of the Moreton Bay Area.

This specimen is of red quartzite and the edge has been formed by the removal of two large flakes, and shows distinct polishing along either face. The back in this case has been flaked to form the usual rounded hand grip.

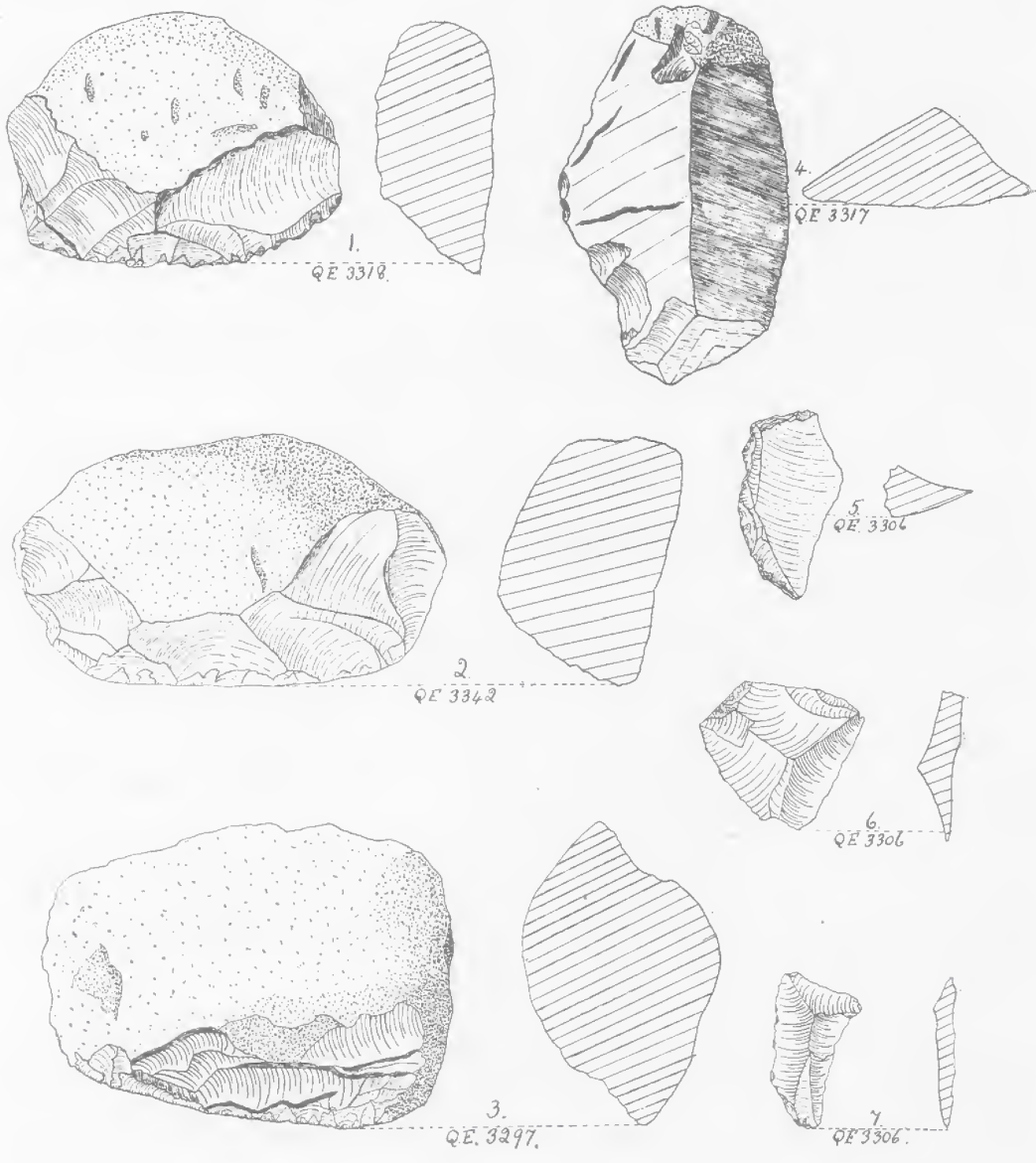
Several miles to the westward of these sandhills lies the Mooloolah River, and I am indebted to Mr. W. Potts, of Mooloolaba, an old pioneer of the district, for showing me some further native middens along portions of its bank. They were composed of piles of oyster shells, sometimes rising in the bank to a height of seven feet above the river.

Mr. Potts informed me that the blacks used to dive for oysters, either from the bank or from their canoes: native name "Kumbur" ("The Australian Race," E. M. Curr, Vol. III, p. 143), made from the bark of swamp mahogany trees. The oysters, of course, grew on the bed of the river. One can easily pick the parts where they are most abundant, as nearby are numerous shells. In barren portions of the river, the banks are likewise barren of shells.

After a spell of coastal food the Aborigines, probably at the suggestion of some old man, would move camp and journey up into the rain-forests of Buderim Mountain or some other locality, and so they travelled from place to place, as the instinct or the call for change of food prompted them.

An interesting feature of this area, which has disappeared through denudation within the past few years, was the presence of rock carvings or "peckings" on the shore-platforms of Pt. Cartwright and Moffats and Wickham Heads.

In the year 1932 quite a number were still in existence but the alternate wetting by sea water and sun drying caused the sandstone to flake away, eliminating all trace of these relics. They must at one time have been very extensive. These rock carvings showed emu and kangaroo footprints, and also those of a variety of smaller birds. Dingo footprints were a fairly-common feature. I was lucky enough to see one quite good "pecking" of a human footprint. Other markings of an indefinite character occurred, but some of these were very vague.



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Figs. 1-7.—Implements from Point Cartwright Middens.

## LIST OF SPECIMENS.

- Fig. (1) Q.E. 3318.—A chopper for “bungwall” fern. In size 91 mm. x 73 mm. x 41 mm. Composed of a water-worn quartzite pebble, which has been reduced to a chisel edge on one side by flaking. It shows secondary chipping and flaking and possesses a good chopping edge.
- Fig. (2) Q.E. 3342.—Another “bungwall” chopper, showing considerable use, the cutting edge being rounded off by continuous pounding. In size 120 mm. x 67 mm. x 55 mm. Composed of quartzite it is very weathered on its original surface. It shows good flaking and secondary chipping and has the same chisel edge as the former specimen.
- Fig. (3) Q.E. 3297.—Chopper of quartz, which is very interesting in view of the fact that it possesses two cutting edges on opposite margins. Both are well worn and show flaking and secondary chipping. It is 120 mm. x 52 mm. x 60 mm. in size.
- Q.E. 3307—Unfigured Specimen.—Another chopper made from a quartzite pebble which has been reduced to a good edge by the striking off of one large flake. It too possesses a good chopping edge. Size 70 mm. x 70 mm. x 30 mm.
- Fig. (4) Q.E. 3317.—A stone knife of quartzite. Native name “dhak-ke.” Size 101 mm. x 63 mm. x 24 mm. This specimen is well shaped and possesses two good cutting edges, one of which shows secondary chipping.
- Fig. (5) Q.E. 3306.—This specimen is rather a fine example of a chipped back scraper 51 mm. x 29 mm. It is made of flint and shows secondary chipping. The single cutting edge has apparently been subjected to much use.
- Fig. (6) Q.E. 3306.—A scraper or knife 41 mm. x 46 mm. Made of fine-grained grey quartzite. Shows secondary flaking and possesses two fine cutting edges.
- Fig. (7) Q.E. 3306.—A small scarifier of mottled pink quartzite 43 mm. x 22 mm. This specimen shows secondary chipping and flaking, and possesses two good cutting edges. The blade is distinctly curved to one side.

## UNFIGURED SPECIMENS.

- Q.E. 3306.—A small scraper 25 mm. x 23 mm. made of common opal. Shows secondary flaking and possesses one cutting edge.
- Q.E. 3306.—A side scraper showing secondary flaking 41 mm. x 33 mm. Composed of fine-grained grey quartzite, weathered on two original faces. Possesses two cutting edges.
- Q.E. 3306.—A small spokeshave or chisel of flint 48 mm. x 33 mm. Possesses grooved cutting edge at broad end, formed by a large conchoidal fracture in the stone. Secondary flaking is noticeable.
- Q.E. 3306.—A small flake scraper made of fine-grained grey quartzite 30 mm. x 25 mm. Possesses one cutting edge.
- Q.E. 3306.—A small high-backed scraper 35 mm. x 27 mm., made of grey quartzite. Shows good flaking and possesses one cutting edge.
- Q.E. 3306.—A rather fine scraper or knife, made of quartzite 61 mm. x 45 mm. Slightly discoloured by iron staining. Shows secondary chipping and flaking. It possesses three cutting edges.

- Q.E. 3306.—A high-backed scraper 38 mm. x 32 mm. Composed of grey quartzite slightly weathered on its outer extremities. Possesses three good cutting edges and shows secondary flaking.
- Q.E. 3306.—Another quartzite scraper, 43 mm. x 42 mm. Shows secondary flaking and possesses three cutting edges.
- Q.E. 3306.—A fairly well-shaped scraper of fine-grained grey quartzite, 40 mm. x 43 mm. It, however, shows very little secondary working. Possesses one cutting edge.
- Q.E. 3306.—A knife of quartzite, discoloured by oxidation, 45 mm. x 33 mm. It is rather well shaped and possesses two cutting edges showing fair use.
- Q.E. 3306.—A knife or scraper of silicious rock 58 mm. x 38 mm. Shows secondary flaking, and possesses one good cutting edge.
- Q.E. 3306.—A high backed side scraper of grey quartzite, 41 mm. x 31 mm. Shows secondary flaking and chipping and possesses a good cutting edge.
- Q.E. 3306.—A rather more irregular type of scraper 36 mm. x 41 mm. Made of grey quartzite, slightly discoloured by oxidation. It possesses three cutting edges, two of them showing much wear.
- Q.E. 3306.—Apparently a knife which has been broken during process of manufacture, 41 mm. x 35 mm. Composed of a grey rather coarse quartzite. Shows secondary chipping and flaking and possesses two cutting edges.
- Q.E. 3306.—A small scraper 36 mm. x 30 mm. Made of fine-grained grey quartzite. Shows rough flaking, but has a rather unfinished appearance. Possesses three cutting edges.
- Q.E. 3306.—A small scraper 35 mm. x 20 mm. with a chisel edge at one end. It is composed of a fine-grained grey quartzite and shows secondary flaking. It possesses two cutting edges.
- Q.E. 3306.—A large implement of quartzite stained by iron, 75 mm. x 57 mm. Possesses only primary flaking, but one cutting edge shows considerable use. It was probably used as a chopper for cutting up "bungwall" fern root.
- Q.E. 3306.—A simple knife of quartzite 75 mm. x 42 mm. Made from a single flake struck from a water worn rock. Its single cutting edge shows much wear, and it too was probably used for cutting "bungwall" root.
- Q.E. 3306.—A small scraper of common opal 32 mm. x 17 mm. It is rather a crude implement, and has one poor cutting edge.
- Q.E. 3306.—A scraper of quartzite 56 mm. x 32 mm. Has one rather rough cutting edge. Only a little rough flaking is visible.
- Q.E. 3306.—A knife formed of quartzite, struck from a water-worn stone, 61 mm. x 24 mm. Has two cutting edges, and shows a little secondary chipping.
- Q.E. 3306.—A scraper or knife of quartzite also stained brown by oxidation, 63 mm. x 44 mm. Shows secondary flaking and possesses two good cutting edges.
- Q.E. 3299.—An upper grinder of trachyte. In size it is 104 mm. x 104 mm. x 61 mm. and possesses much secondary flaking. It was used in conjunction with the large sandstone grinders for milling "bungwall" root.

- Q.E. 3300.—This implement is composed of trachyte with a badly-weathered surface, indicating extreme age. It is apparently a stone axe in the making and shows good flaking and secondary chipping. Size 105 mm. x 87 mm. x 46 mm. It was evidently discarded for some reason or other before completion.
- Q.E. 3284.—A lower grinding stone, composed of a fairly fine-grained grey grit. Size  $9\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $8\frac{1}{4}$ " x  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". It possesses fairly deep grinding hollows on both sides.
- Q.E. 3282.—A lower grinding stone composed of a fine uniform-grained grey sandstone. Size  $8\frac{1}{4}$ " x 8" x  $3\frac{3}{4}$ ". This also possesses fairly deep ground-out hollows on both sides.
- Q.E. 3286.—A triangular-shaped lower grinding stone composed of a fairly fine-grained grey sandstone. Size 9" x  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $2\frac{1}{4}$ ". It has had very little use, and the hollow on one side is quite shallow.
- Q.E. 3285.—Portion of a grinding stone composed of a fine uniform-grained grey sandstone. Size 8" x 9" x  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". This one has apparently been used for the purpose of sharpening axes and other tools, as the groove is wider and larger in extent than that observed in other specimens. It is grooved on both sides.
- Q.E. 3287.—A lower grinding stone composed of a very fine-grained grey sandstone. Size 8" x  $5\frac{3}{4}$ " x  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". The groove in this one is fairly shallow and appears on one side of the stone only.
- Q.E. 3294.—Fragment of a lower grinding stone composed of a coarse uneven grained sandstone. Size 6" x  $5\frac{1}{4}$ " x  $2\frac{1}{4}$ ". It has presumably been broken early in its use as there is little sign of wear on the grinding surface.
- Q.E. 3292.—Half of a lower grinding stone composed of a coarse sandstone. Size  $6\frac{3}{4}$ " x  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ". It possesses a good worn groove on one side only. This specimen is badly weathered, and has probably been lying there for a considerable period.
- Q.E. 3292.—A small lower grinding stone, composed of a fairly coarse-grained sandstone, containing limonite, which has at some time been deposited into hollows in the rock. Size  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $5\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". It is ground out on one side only.